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Case Clubs of the University of Michigan Law School

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Case Clubs

of the

University of Michigan Law School



Ann Arbor, Michigan

1931

THE CASE CLUBS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LAW SCHOOL

The Case Clubs of the University of Michigan Law School are extra-curricular organizations conducted by and for the benefit of the law students themselves. They are designed to fill a need not wholly supplied by the classroom work. The work of the clubs consists of analyzing, briefing and arguing questions of law which arise upon hypothetical cases.

For the purpose of facilitating the work, the members are divided by lot into four clubs, each club consisting of approximately thirty-two first year law students, eight second year law students, and one third year law student who acts as an adviser and manager of the club. The names of the clubs are the Holmes Club, the Kent Club, the Marshall Club and the Story Club. The members of each club are then divided into teams of two men each. Each first year team is pitted against another first year team of the same club. Each second year team is pitted against another team of another one of the four clubs. In other words, first year arguments are intra-club, and second year arguments are inter-club.

Each first year group consisting of two teams is given a statement of facts prepared by the faculty, which facts give rise to one or more questions of law. These questions of law are studied by the group, full use being made of the textbooks, encyclopedias, digests, annotated series, reports, and other sources in the law library. Instruction is given by advisers in the use of the law library. Each team prepares a brief of its side of the question. These briefs are examined and criticized by the advisers. Finally, an oral argument is made before a competent court after which a decision is handed down, based upon the law of the case, precisely as a decision would be rendered by a court of law. The participants are graded on the basis of the merits of their performances. The four men receiving the highest grades in each club are selected to enter a final argument. The winners in the final argument are rewarded by prizes consisting of three years' subscription to the Michigan Law Review.

Each second year group consisting of two teams is likewise given a statement of facts which is studied, briefed and argued. The

two best second year men from each club are selected to enter semi-final arguments, and the winners of the semi-final arguments engage in a final argument which takes place each year on Founders' Day. The law firm of Bulkley, Ledyard, Dickinson & Wright of Detroit has created a trust fund consisting of \$4000, the income from which is devoted each year to reward the participants in the final argument. It has been customary to award the winning counsel \$100 and their opponents \$50.

The advantages of the Case Club work are numerous. The participant becomes familiar with the library, the lawyer's kit of tools. This is of immediate value to him as a student, as well as of more remote value in practice. He gets experience, with the benefit of competent criticism, in written and oral argument, the cultivation of which cannot be commenced too soon. Finally, it is common observation that the close study of particular problems, which the club work entails, illuminates the whole of the ordinary course work of the school. To really come to grips with one question helps one to understand, to get the feeling of, every subject one studies.

Participation is wholly voluntary. No credit is given for the work. Its principal reward lies in the benefit received in the way of education in the use of the library and the preparation and arguing of cases. A fee of \$2 is charged for the purpose of defraying the cost of administration of the clubs, the cost of prizes, and the expense of an annual banquet which is held at the end of the year.

The following rules concerning the Case Clubs should be examined by those interested in participation:

RULES OF THE CASE CLUBS

1. Each contestant must enroll and pay his registration fee during the registration period which will be announced shortly after the opening of the school year.

2. No one may enroll as a second year member who has not been enrolled as a first year member, except in those instances in which the applicant has transferred from another law school and is in his first year of residence.

3. Students who have had but one year of work during the regular session may participate in the second year contests regardless of the number of summer sessions attended.

4. A student may, if he desires, select the club in which he wishes to be enrolled, and such selection will be complied with unless it becomes necessary to transfer him to balance the enrollment in the several clubs.

5. Partners may be selected. If no preference is expressed partners will be assigned by lot.

6. 'Two weeks' preparation will be allowed on all first year cases and second year cases prior to the semi-finals. Briefs must be handed to judges and exchanged with opponents not later than 48 hours before the trial of the case.

7. The Case Club bulletin board is located in the south end of the first floor corridor in the law school building. Club members should watch the board for announcements, and will be deemed to have notice of all matters posted thereon.